

Puget Sound Partnership

our sound, our community, our chance

Principles and processes for target setting

Draft Feb 3, 2011 – for partner review

Background

Per RCW 90.71.310(1)(c), “The action agenda shall include near-term and long-term benchmarks designed to ensure continuous progress needed to reach the goals, objectives, and designated outcomes by 2020.” Per RCW 90.71.280(3), “the [leadership] council shall confer with the [science] panel on incorporating ... benchmarks into the action agenda.”

Strategic Priority E.1.1 of the Action Agenda calls for the establishment of measures and benchmarks for assessing progress in the ecosystem as one of five major components of the Partnership’s performance management system. Elements E.1.1.3 and E.1.1.4 of this strategy call for identification of targets for ecosystem indicators and identification of intermediate outcomes with measurable targets and benchmarks, respectively. Per near-term action E.1.1 (parts a and b), these steps were scheduled to be complete by November 1, 2009. Sub-element E.1.1.5 calls for refinement of intermediate outcomes to reflect advancements related to the ecosystem goals, outcomes, and indicators.

General approach to setting ecosystem recovery targets

The Puget Sound Partnership’s Leadership Council will adopt ecosystem recovery targets that (1) reflect scientific understandings about ecosystem conditions, functions, and services and (2) articulate the Council’s vision about desired future conditions for the Puget Sound ecosystem

Scientists will provide objective information about possible future conditions and describe the scientific knowledge, assumptions, and uncertainties in order to support selection of future conditions as specific targets for ecosystem recovery. Entities involved in implementing protection and restoration strategies and actions and other key partners and stakeholders will then provide information to articulate their perspectives about desired future conditions and recommendations for how the Partnership should select targets based on the available scientific understandings. The Leadership Council will adopt targets based on this information.

The Puget Sound Partnership will develop new targets or revise previously adopted targets as new scientific information becomes available.

Principles guiding ecosystem recovery target decisions and development of background information

- The Leadership Council’s articulation of desired future conditions might encompass a range of ecosystem states, reflecting ranges of willingness to invest resources, willingness to adjust current social and economic patterns that are harmful to Puget Sound, and/or understandings and perceptions about the need for new or increased recovery efforts. The range of desired future conditions for the Puget Sound ecosystem might encompass:
 - Fully functioning, highly resilient states, in which there is relatively high confidence that ecosystem structures, functions, and services will be sustained into the future.
 - Balanced states in which social, economic, and ecological perspectives of ecosystem condition and ecosystem recovery provide some degree of confidence that a functioning system will be sustained into the future.
 - Substantially improved states, in which there is some confidence that recovery objectives will be achieved by improved strategies, increased level of effort, etc.
 - Projected or expected states, in which there is some confidence that recovery objectives will be achieved by continuation of current strategies, programs, etc.
- Science-based descriptions of ecosystem states and pressures for use as targets may be based on (1) reference directions (e.g., increase or decrease from current levels), (2) baseline conditions (e.g., using historical conditions or existing locations relatively free from human pressures or disturbance as reference conditions), and (3) modeling biological relationships between pressures and ecosystem attributes.
- Science-based descriptions of specific ecosystem conditions and pressures for use as targets need to be based on the ecological tradeoffs and dependencies among different components of the ecosystem (e.g., eelgrass targets need to be consistent with salmon targets).
- Technical information to support target setting and decisions about targets should incorporate consideration of variable shifting and uncertain environmental and climate conditions
- Technical information to support target setting and decisions about targets should incorporate consideration of current and future conditions across the Action Areas and watersheds of the Puget Sound basin.
- Evaluation of improved scientific information about ecosystem conditions and pressures should trigger reevaluation of Puget Sound ecosystem recovery targets at the direction of the Partnership’s Science Panel.

Specific process steps and timeline for 2011 target setting

The Partnership is applying viability and situation analyses from the *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation* as tools to develop information to support target setting. These are described in more detail in materials available at conservationmeasures.org. The process for 2011 work is as follows:

1. Two types of teams with subject matter expertise will develop technical background information on target setting for each topic:

<p><u>For ecosystem components</u>, target setting will advance under the leadership of “indicator champions” using the <i>Open Standards</i> viability analysis approach (e.g., using ranges to describe ecosystem conditions and defining categories of conditions as describe current conditions and possible targets).</p> <p>Guidance for this work will be provided on February 4. Meetings to discuss the approach to and progress with the work will be convened in mid-February (Feb. 14, 15, or 16) and in mid-March (Mar. 14, 15, 16). Brief technical reports (similar to those produced in January for eelgrass and shellfish beds re-opened) authored by the indicator champions (and any collaborators) will be delivered March 23, 2011.</p>	<p><u>For pressure reductions</u>, target setting will advance by the efforts of interdisciplinary teams developing results chains (i.e. explicit sequential hypotheses describing how strategies and actions would lead to expected levels of reduction of pressures on the ecosystem which in turn would lead to the ecosystem responding in predictable ways).</p> <p>These teams -- small groups of subject matter experts convened by Partnership staff -- are meeting to initiate this work in late January or early February. Teams will work through a few more meetings and deliver brief technical reports (similar to the chapters of the Partnership’s November 2009 technical memorandum on results chains) on March 23, 2011.</p>
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2. In April and early May 2011, Science Panel members will conduct scientific review of the technical reports prepared by indicator champions and interdisciplinary teams.
3. In April and May 2011, science advisors will evaluate relationships (tradeoffs, dependencies, etc.) among target topics and specific objectives and provide an ecosystem-perspective analysis of candidate targets.
4. In April and May 2011, implementers and stakeholders will review and evaluate technical reports and communicate their perspectives on possible targets for Partnership consideration.
5. In early June 2011, Partnership staff will compile information on implementer and stakeholder perspectives and summarize scientific input from review and from ecosystem-perspective analysis for presentation to Leadership Council.
6. In mid-June, 2011 the Leadership Council will adopt targets for publication in the public review draft of the 2011 revision of the Action Agenda.